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FEATURES

Winchester family's house is electrifying

NELL ESCOBAR COAKLEY | STAFF WRITER

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Caroline Staudt shows off her 'party trick,' boiling water on her induction range in just a few seconds. WINCHESTER NEWS STAFF PHOTO/NELL ESCOBAR COAKLEY

If you're driving down New Meadows Road, you probably can't pick out the all-electric house in the neighborhood. And because solar panels [illegible] common these days, that won't help you, either.

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Certainly, Caroline Staudt's house looks just like her neighbor's homes. It just operates differently.

Staudt recently opened her all-electric home at 2 New Meadows Road to residents during Winchester Climate Solutions Week to show off all the modifications she and her husband have made to the house since they bought it in 2010.

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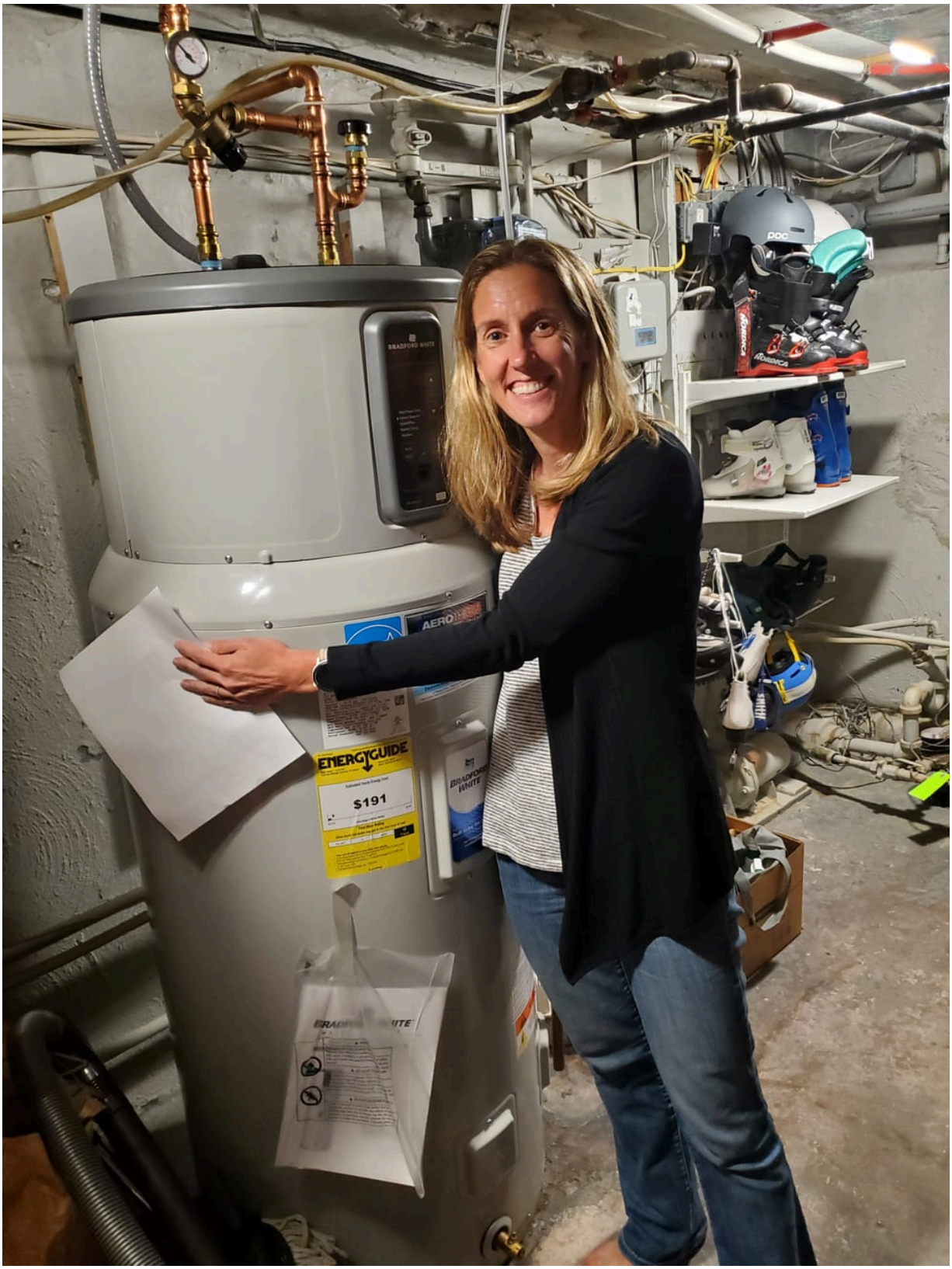

Caroline Staudt hugs her electric heat pump boiler. WINCHESTER NEWS STAFF PHOTO/NELL ESCOBAR COAKLEY

About 30 people toured the house on Sept. 21.

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"I was surprised and really excited," Staudt said, of the tour. "There are a lot of people who want to take some steps in their home. A few of them came in blind, but there were a lot of good questions."

A member of the Climate Action Advisory Committee, Staudt was happy to volunteer her house for the week-long event. She said there seemed to be a lot of interest by attendees about the process of electrification.

"What that tells me is that people want to see the end product," Staudt said. "I opened the house because there are people who don't know this existed, that this is possible in an older home built in the 1940s."

Getting started

The process of electrifying the house didn't start until 2021, but it had been on Staudt's mind since 2013 when the family put on an addition.

"Nothing was electric, everything was gas," Staudt said. "All the big things were gas. After we did the addition, it was still all gas. We weren't wise yet to the fact that we wanted to electrify."

Staudt said the changes to full electrification were incremental. The family was aware of the climate crisis and wanted to "do the right thing."

"It took time to really educate ourselves," Staudt said. "We started small. Like when the lawnmower broke, we got an electric one. And then when we did the addition, we asked ourselves what we would need to replace things."

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The heat pump, left, and electric dryer are part of the efforts made by Caroline Staudt and her family. WINCHESTER NEWS STAFF PHOTOS/NELL ESCOBAR COAKLEY

A year-long move to Sweden changed everything.

"In Sweden, everyone has heat pumps and electric cars," she said. "A lot of these efforts were just part of everyday life."

By the time the family moved back, Staudt said they were ready to commit to replacing "the big stuff."

Staudt said she and her husband, Gerry DiGiusto, had sold their gas cars when they left for Sweden, instead of just leaving them sitting for a year. When they returned, they bought two electric vehicles.

That was the summer of 2022.

"When we came back, we bought the two EVs," Staudt said. "And we came back thinking more about solar. We talked to a neighbor who had done it and then we jumped on solar."

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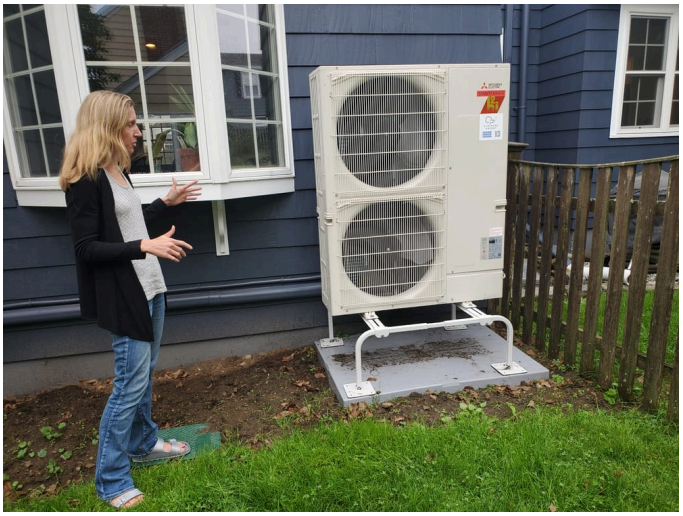
Sure, it took some work getting the house upgraded to the point where the roof could bear the weight of solar panels. It was also time consuming, but Staudt said it was very much worth the effort.

"The panels were turned on in January 2024 and we haven't paid an electric bill since March 2024," she said. "We sell the electricity back into the grid and we have crazy credits. It was very well worth it."

The electric water heater came next.

"When it was at the end of its life, I called Ken Pruitt (director of sustainability) and said, 'We want to do the whole house, starting with the water heater now. What are our options?'"



The heat pump outside, left, and the control panels for the solar panels and EV charger on Caroline Staudt's house.

WINCHESTER NEWS STAFF PHOTOS/NELL ESCOBAR COAKLEY

The heat pump was added afterwards. It's a slim unit outside the house, much smaller than the central air unit it's replaced.

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Staudt explained some people question how a heat pump that draws heat from the air works when the temperature is freezing.

"That's a question I get asked a lot," she said. "In the winter, it's cold to us, but there's still a lot of heat in the air. The heat pump is designed to work in temperatures of -22 degrees Fahrenheit."

Staudt's heat pump was installed in June 2025.

"I'm so excited about the winter," she said. "I lived through the summer and our house was more comfortable than with the previous AC."

Additionally, the family has installed a new induction oven as well as a heat pump dryer.

Making the change

Can you do all these things, too? The answer, Staudt said, is a definite yes.

In fact, Staudt traded in her former job as a REALTOR and now works for Elephant Energy, a Colorado and Boston-based company that installs energy-efficient heat pumps and water heaters.

She said knowing what she knows now, it's important for people who want to make these changes to plan ahead.

"I recommend thinking about sequencing," she said. "All these things cost something and you don't want to wait until the existing thing is broken. Look into it now."

Speak to people, Staudt added, and become educated.

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Caroline Staudt points out the solar panels on her New Meadows Road house. WINCHESTER NEWS STAFF PHOTO/NELL ESCOBAR COAKLEY

Staudt said her company has installed heat pumps from $15,000 to $45,000 and there are plenty of rebates available, if you're looking for help funding the project. In fact, she said Mass Save has a rebate of up to $10,000.

Staudt said there are audits and paperwork and finding the right experienced contractors to make the project happen. And even if you don't receive a large rebate, there are zero percent loans for up to seven years for $25,000 to help finance the work.

Staudt added Massachusetts recently introduced a Residential Heat Pump Rate, a program to lower heat pump electric rates from November through April.

With all these options available, Staudt said her recommendatio
make an appointment for an energy audit with Mass Save as a sta

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point. There's no requirement to do anything with the audit, she added, but it can give homeowners a good idea of what changes they might want to make in the future and what the costs are.

"Start asking questions," Staudt said. "Get all the information that you can. There's a lot of misinformation out there. What you want is someone like Ken to talk to, to answer questions about what this might all look like for you, what pieces there are, to talk through the options."

What's the end goal? Staudt laughs.

"I would love to snap my fingers and have everyone electrify now," she said. "But I understand that we need to be pragmatic. My advice is to go ahead and get the lay of the land, start planning and talk to someone who understands and can explain the incentives."

Nell Escobar Coakley has been a journalist for more than 30 years. She is co-founder and editor-in-chief of Gotta Know Medford and editor of Winchester News. She can be reached at editor@winchesternews.org.

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The following was submitted by the Network for Social Justice: The Winchester community came together last week at the Griffin Museum of Photography for the inaugural Black History and Culture Celebration, an evening filled with music, student creativity, and powerful messages about equity, unity, and the enduring legacy of Black

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The big events in Winchest Music School always take place in Nichols

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amounted to nothing on Sunday afternoon. But during the Feb. 22-23 blizzard, Winchester News once again asked residents to send their snow photos. And here is what we received! Solmaz Amirnazmi said her daughters and

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Performance Hall. With the school and its performances' growing in popularity, the hall and many of its amenities are due for an upgrade. The performance hall is one of the main areas that the school seeks to

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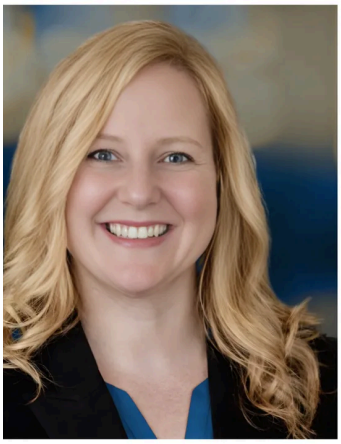

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Winchester School Committee candidates bring contrasting backgrounds to Thursday forum

Two candidates for Winchester's School Committee will face voters at a forum as the district navigates a new literacy curriculum, budget pressures and questions about student mental health. Heather von Mering and John Bellaire are competing for an open seat on the School Committee, which oversees a budget von

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EVENTS

Ripley Chapel in Winchester presents 'Syldason: You Are Welcome Here'

The following was submitted by the Ripley Chapel at First Congregational Church: On Friday, March 13, beginning at 7:30 p.m., live in-person and live streamed from the stunning Ripley Chapel at First Congregational Church, Winchester, 21 Church St., join in with Syldason, a duo concert featuring Sylvie Zakarian,

March 4, 2026

NEWS

Rep. Michael Day helps House colleagues pass sweeping energy affordability bill

The following was submitted by the Office of Rep. Michael S. Day: Rep. Michael S. Day and his colleagues in the House of Representatives recently passed energy affordability legislation that would result in over $9 billion in savings for utility ratepayers over the next 10 years. The bill maintains critical

March 4, 2026

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